

STEPS TO BAR ADMISSION IN TEXAS

TEXAS BOARD OF LAW EXAMINERS

CONGRATULATIONS!!

Admission to law school is a wonderful accomplishment, but it is only the first step.

Admission to the Bar comes after law school graduation.

The qualification process starts now.

TWO STEP PROCESS

Declaration of Intent to Study Law

- October 1 deadline (Fall)
- May 1 deadline (Spring)
- June 1 deadline (Baylor Spring)
- September 15 deadline (Summer)

Application for Bar Examination

- July 2019 application due January 30, 2019 (to avoid late fee)

CHARACTER & FITNESS

Supreme Court certifies all applicants for admission to the Bar.

Law requires filing of Declaration of Intent to initiate investigation of applicants.

Board of Law Examiners investigates character and fitness of all applicants on behalf of the Supreme Court.

GOOD MORAL CHARACTER

Assessment for character traits that are likely to result in injury to future clients, obstruct administration of justice or violate the Texas Disciplinary Rules regulating professional conduct of lawyers.

Usually involve dishonesty or lack of trustworthiness in carrying out responsibilities.

DECLARATION OF INTENT

Requires detailed information about:

- Employment history
- Past Residence addresses
- School discipline
- Criminal history
- Personal references
- Civil litigation
- Tax filing and payment history
- Past due debt

FITNESS

The assessment of mental and emotional health as it affects the competence of a prospective lawyer.

Purpose of inquiry is to exclude persons with a mental or emotional illness or condition which would be likely to prevent the person from carrying out duties to clients, courts or the profession.

Likelihood is determined by acts of misconduct that are related to the mental illness or condition, not the diagnosis alone.

Fitness required is present fitness.

**DON'T
DELAY!**

REGULAR FILING FEE \$190

ADDITIONAL LATE FEE \$150

BOARD OF LAW EXAMINERS

Website: www.ble.texas.gov

Phone: 512-463-1621

All forms are accessed through the website ONLY.

NO HANDWRITTEN forms accepted.

READ THE INSTRUCTIONS!

Contact Board of Law Examiners with questions.

Don't rely on other law students for advice.

FULLY DISCLOSE EVERYTHING!

DO NOT OMIT NEGATIVE INFORMATION!

Demonstrate honesty in the application process to avoid creating additional issues.

Don't minimize, mischaracterize or misrepresent the facts, no matter how embarrassing it may be.

ATLAS ACCOUNT REQUIRED

Every student filing a Declaration of Intent is required to create an ATLAS account on the Board's website.

Record your user name and password for future use.

You must submit your Declaration and pay on line.

ATLAS account will be the primary way the Board communicates with you from filing your Declaration until you receive your Bar Exam results and licensing information.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All Board of Law Examiners records and proceedings regarding character and fitness are

CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC and CONFIDENTIAL

Three exceptions are listed in Rule I(e):

Upon written authority of Declarant;

In response to a valid subpoena from a court of competent jurisdiction; or

To the Office of Chief Disciplinary Counsel of the State Bar of Texas or the Texas Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee.

MATTERS OF INTEREST TO CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Major areas include:

Criminal history

Compliance with court orders

Significant past due debt

Dishonesty/Lack of candor in answers

Chemical dependency and related misconduct

Failure to timely file federal income tax returns

Failure to timely file and pay payroll taxes

**Non-disclosure of criminal history or school discipline to
law school or Board of Law Examiners**

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Read carefully!

Exercise due diligence.

When in doubt, disclose.

Failure to Appear and Lack of Financial Responsibility are not “minor traffic violations.”

Order of Expunction v. Order of Non Disclosure.

When to obtain records from the court.

CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY

Within past 5 years, have you abused, been addicted to, or been treated for the use or abuse of alcohol or any other substance?

Treatment and rehabilitation will be considered.

Other facts indicating chemical dependency will be considered.

Evaluation may be required.

TLAP is available for assistance. 1-800-343-8527

Probationary license must be granted if chemical dependency is only issue found, and person does not have two years of abstinence.

MENTAL HEALTH

Focus is on related misconduct, NOT diagnosis.

Read the question carefully and provide information specifically requested.

Consult treating professional if in doubt.

Effective treatment is important to show current fitness.

Monitoring may be required.

TIME IS ON YOUR SIDE!

Purpose of Declaration of Intent is to provide you with early notice of issues and concerns that need to be evaluated and possibly corrected to remove impediments to licensure.

Board is required to inform you of curative measures.

HOUSEKEEPING

Read rules governing Admission to the Bar of Texas

Authorization and Release form and Certification is required.

Retain your ATLAS username and password.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

Birth Certificate or other documentation to show compliance with Rule II(a)(5).

Law School Application

- Amend NOW to correct omissions or errors.

Fingerprints for FBI Criminal History.

Request additional time for documents if needed.

A NOTE ABOUT NAME CHANGES

If your name has changed in the past, you may need to provide proof of the name change, such as a marriage certificate or a court order.

If your name changes while your Declaration is pending, you will need to amend your Declaration and provide proof of the name change.

Keep in mind for when you apply for a bar exam, your government issued I.D. must be current. The name on your bar exam admission ticket must match your I.D., and your law license can only be issued in the name that appears on your I.D.

PROCESSING THE DECLARATION

You will receive an acknowledgement through ATLAS.

Investigation requires up to 9 months.

- Preliminary certification issued OR**
- Preliminary determination letter on
character and/or fitness. (PDL Letter)**

**Hearing on PDL may be held if requested within 30 days OR
complete curative measures with no hearing.**

REMEMBER THE TWO STEP

First, file your Declaration.

Second, file your application for a bar examination, which includes an updated character and fitness investigation.

Your character and fitness determination is made twice, when you file your Declaration and when you file your Application.

**GOOD LUCK
IN LAW
SCHOOL!**